

BULLETIN OF THE DEPARTMENTS OF HISTORY AND  
OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SCIENCE IN  
QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY, KINGSTON,  
ONTARIO, CANADA

No. 3, April, 1912

THE  
STATUS OF WOMEN IN NEW ENGLAND  
AND NEW FRANCE

BY

JAMES DOUGLAS

The Jackson Press, Kingston.





## THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN NEW ENGLAND AND NEW FRANCE.

---

The position occupied by women in the neighbouring French and English colonies differed as widely as the habits of the colonists and the practices of their respective churches. The early French colonists were unaccompanied by their wives, but had no prejudice against allying themselves with Indian women. The Puritans on the other hand crossed the ocean with their households. But the retiring role assigned to the women in New England was in striking contrast to the prominent part played by the few women in the French colony. Louis Hébert, when he brought his family over in 1617, nine years after the founding of Quebec, in a petition to the Duc de Ventadour, states that he "is the head of the first French family which came to live in the country, though it has been inhabited since the beginning of the century; that he brought with him all his goods and chattels from Paris, where he leaves relations and friends, in order to lay the foundation of a Christian colony," and therefore he claims certain considerations. And up to Kirke's conquest in 1629 there are records of only two other families immigrating, those of Guillaume Couillard and Abraham Martin. Later on in the history of the colony the supply of marriageable girls was so scarce that they had to be imported with the express purpose of supplying the colonists with wives. Mlle. Mance, one of the promoters of the Montreal Company, brought over some "virtuous girls" to Montreal. In 1644 the Queen sent "quite a number of very honest girls to Canada under the care of a nun of Ciumpier." In 1670 the Archbishop of Rouen was instructed to "use his influence to get girls to go voluntarily to Canada." Colbert in the same year begs de Juenet, a merchant of Rouen, to try to induce two girls from each parish to go in search of husbands in Canada; and Frontenac assures Colbert that if 150 girls a year were shipped they would readily find husbands. The girls shipped to Canada were chosen with more care as to their morals than those who were sent to the Antilles. While of



course the church was averse to illegitimate relations of the sexes, the authorities, both ecclesiastical and civil, in the early days of French colonization, encouraged by advice, the marriage of Frenchmen with Indian squaws. Left-handed marriages were frequent, but marriages between French and Indians, with the blessing of the church, were so few that four only are recorded. The small number of marriages may be judged by the correspondingly small number of baptisms. Between 1621 and 1629 there seem to have been only two marriages and six baptisms. The first marriage "célébré, avec les cérémonies ordinaires"\* was that of Hébert's eldest daughter to Etienne Jonquist, in 1617. But it was fruitless, for both died prematurely. The first registered wedding, that of Guillemette, Hébert's second daughter, to Guillaume Couillard, took place, as Ferland points out, two and a half months after the first marriage celebrated in New England, that of Edwin Winslow to Susan White, a marriage which caused much comment in England and even political complications under Archbishop Laud, because performed before the civil magistrate and without ecclesiastical ceremony and benediction. When Champlain left Canada, after turning over to David Kirke Quebec and its scanty stores, all the women of the colony remained, but they numbered only five. They were the Widow Hébert, who was already re-married to Guillaume Hubon; her daughter, Marie Langlois, married to Jean Juchereau; Guillemette Couillard, the wife of Abraham Martin, a noted pilot of the day, whose name is immortalized in the Plains of Abraham; and two women of lesser note, not remembered by name. Authentic proof of the slow growth of the population is derived from the number of baptisms recorded in the register of Notre Dame de Quebec, which has been kept and preserved since the year 1621. Between 1621 and 1661 there were only 674 children christened in the only populated portion of Canada—Quebec and its surrounding country—or an average of less than seventeen per annum, despite the amazing fecundity of the French Canadian. It speaks, however, for the chastity of the population that only one of these was illegitimate. There were probably few half-breeds, as the resident Indians in the vicinity of Que-

---

\*Abbe Ferland, *Registres de Notre Dame de Quebec*, p. 10.



bec were in missions or under strict clerical control. Of course, the population at these dates was small compared with that of New England, for in 1620 that of Quebec, which constituted the whole of the sedentary inhabitants of New France, was only forty persons. This had increased to 2500 by 1662, of whom about 1100 were in Quebec and its neighbourhood. In that year about 300 immigrants for the New World were embarked from New Rochelle, of whom about seventy-five were destined for Newfoundland. Of those looking forward to Canada as a home, sixty died on the voyage and 150 arrived at destination, including thirty-five marriageable girls in search of husbands.

When we compare the social state of the French colony with that of the English colonists, especially the New England colonists, we come face to face with the radical difference of motive in which the opposing colonies originated. The writer of the *Brief Relation of the State of New England* says: "New England differs from other foreign plantations in respect to the grounds and motives inducing the first planters to remove into that American desert. Other plantations were built upon worldly interests: New England upon that which is purely religious." After describing the divergent views between the non-conformists and the prelatists, and the liberal charter granted by King James in 1620, the writer adds: "The report of this charter did encourage many deserving persons to transplant themselves and their families to New England. Gentlemen and ancient and worshipful families, ministers of the gospel, then of great fame here in England, tradesmen, artificers, and planters to the number of about 14,000, did in twelve years' time go thither."

Statistics are incomplete of the number of families which immigrated to Plymouth and the Bay, but such data as we have confirm the determination of the Pilgrims to make the New World their permanent home. The passengers in the "Mayflower" who came over in 1620 consisted of seventy-five men and twenty-nine women. The "Fortune," which brought over others in 1621, carried twenty-nine men and one woman. The "Little James and Ann" in 1623 had on board thirty-five men and nine women. The exact number of those who came to the



Bay State with Endicott, and two years later with Winthrop, has not been preserved. Winthrop tells us that in 1632 the "Griffin" brought over 200 passengers, including men of learning like Cotton and Hooker, and men of wealth like Mr. Haynes (a gentleman of great estate). Drake, in his *Founders of New England*, has collected the passenger lists of a number of vessels sailing for New England subsequent to that date. Up to 1634 the records are few; thereafter they seem to be more complete. The "Christian" in 1623 carried twenty-four men and only four women; and the "Planter" in the same year embarked twenty men and two women. But the "Hopewell" in 1623 had on board six men, four women and seventeen children; and on board the "Planter" of that same year there were twenty-eight men and fourteen women. The "Hopewell" on her next voyage brought out eight men, six women, and fifteen boys and girls; and the "Planter" nine men, four women, and five children. The "Elizabeth" carried out the Bates family of father, mother, five children and two servants. The "Planter" seems to have been a favorite ship, for on her next voyage she booked nine men and fourteen women, against the "Hopewell" with eight men and three women. And thus in fair proportions men, women, and children came over to people New England. Two departures from this distribution of the adult sexes seems to have been made when, in 1642, Winthrop records that the ship "Seabright" brought over twenty children, and some other passengers, the inference being that the children were not members of the family of those on board, but were the first importation of the waifs and strays of English cities. A large importation on board the "John and Sarah" in 1652, unaccompanied by their wives and families, consisted of Scotch prisoners, taken probably by Cromwell in the battle of Dunbar. Two hundred and seventy-two were shipped. How many arrived is not stated.

The women accompanied by their husbands were as eager as the men to face the unknown dangers and exigencies of the new life in the wilderness. These were so hazardous and fatal that "in two or three months' time," Bradford tells us, "half of the passengers by the 'Mayflower' died, so that of a hundred and odd persons scarce fifty remained, and of these, in the time



of most distress, there were but six or seven sound persons." The population of the neighboring French and English colonies, during the formative periods of their existence, grew in reverse rates of speed. The increase of the English colonies was rapid at first and then fell off; that of New France was insignificant during the first quarter century.

Up to the period of the Commonwealth the strongest religious motives induced both the Puritans and the Separatists to flee from England; self-interest was a subsidiary motive. The stories related by the Jesuits of their success in converting the aborigines had sufficient influence on a small group of religious people to cause them to emigrate to New France, notably on the group of religious enthusiasts which first peopled the Island of Montreal. But the mundane inducements which were offered to Frenchmen or women to face the horrors of the sea voyage and the terrors of the wilderness were very slight. It is not, therefore, surprising that, when the census of 1662 was taken, the population of New France was only 2,500 inhabitants.

Josselyn, in his *Two Voyages to New England*, published in 1665, says: "It is published in print that there are not much less than 10,000 souls, English, Scotch, and Irish, in New England." The increase of population was, however, proportionately greater before the Commonwealth than after, as the religious motive was subsequently weaker. Hutchinson says that "in 1640 the importation of settlers now ceased. They, who then professed to be able to give the best account, say that in 298 ships, which were the whole number from the beginning of the colony, there arrived 21,200 passengers, men, women and children, perhaps about 4,000 families, since which more people have removed out of New England to other parts of the world than have come from other parts to it, and the number of families to this day (1670) in the four Governments may be supposed to be less, rather than more, than the natural increase of 4,000."\* Hutchinson adds: "This year (1641) afforded not so pleasing a prospect. As soon as the country

---

\*All the early estimates of the New England population are guess work and less reliable than those made officially of the people of New France.



ceased to be necessary as an asylum for an oppressed people in England, some of those who had been the greatest benefactors there not only discouraged any further transportation, but endeavored to induce such as had gone over to remove." He comments on what might have happened had the political changes in England occurred six or seven years before they did.

The sex of the emigrants really denoted the different character of the rival colonies. The French who were carried over to Canada at first, and for many years, were exclusively male employees of a trading company. They came and went and took no interest in the colony as a home land, or became too enamored of the forest life to settle down as traders in the town or farmers in the country. The New England Separatists of Plymouth, and the Puritans of the Bay, brought their families with them, and devoted their energies exclusively to building homes; organizing civil government, and establishing religious communities on the same general principles as their civil government. So sedentary were they that they had been already twenty-five years on the coast before they even discovered the White Mountains; and their mode of life as well as their religious opinions made the red men's habits extremely obnoxious to them. By contrast, Champlain before his second year of residence had, in company with his Indian allies, penetrated to the Mohawk country of New York, and his eighth year as Governor was spent among the Hurons on the Georgian Bay of Lake Huron, after exploring the Ottawa and crossing Lake Ontario to fight the Iroquois in the state of New York. The English colonists, besides being essentially domestic, when they were settled, obeyed their national instincts by engaging actively in foreign commerce. The French colonists, being supported by a fur trading company, wandered over the forests instead of sailing over the sea, and led adventurous lives inimical to domesticity, in friendly contact with the savages who supplied them with the only article of trade they dealt in. Circumstances, as well as evident inclination, gave different directions to the members of the two groups, and one result was that the home, with family influence as the inspiration, was from the first the keynote of New England life: while ro-



mance and imagination and unrest, excited by the wonderful unrolling of the great and ever greater West, produced a type of men in New France the very opposite of the sedentary Puritans of the coast.

But if there were not many women in New France, those who came over exerted a more conspicuous, if not a more powerful influence than their sisters under the Puritan régime. Mark Pattison's estimate of the status of Puritan women may have been too sweeping. He was writing of John Milton and his wife and not of John Winthrop and his wife, whose letters are as true and touching as ever passed between loving hearts, and could not have been exchanged except between beings whose confidence extended to all the concerns of life, private and public. Nevertheless, it is true that in the estimation of Milton, as of most men endowed with Calvinistic and Puritan ideas, "women were a creation of an inferior and subordinate class. Man was the first-cause of God's creation, and woman was there to minister to his noble being. The Puritans had thrown off chivalry as being the parent of Catholicism, and had replaced it by the Hebrew idea of the subjugation and the seclusion of women." This estimate of woman's sphere lasted far beyond the Puritan times, for Lady Mary Wortley Montague considered, perhaps in a vein of sarcasm, "that God and nature have thrown us into an inferior rank; we are a lower part of creation, and every woman who suffers her vanity and folly, to deny this, rebels against the laws of the Creator and the indisputable order of nature." The Puritan woman was doubtless a good housewife, and a devoted, pious mother, who brought up her children in the fear of God and of their father. She certainly made them masterful and sterling men. But whatever influence these women may have exerted upon their husbands, behind doors, they did not obtrude themselves in public, and played no conspicuous part in political life. In the early memoirs the most conspicuous women were religious fanatics like Mrs. Hutchinson and the Quakers, or else hysterical maniacs like the possessed girls, or the unfortunate witches of the Salem tragedy. Nevertheless, despite the seclusion which was thought to be so appropriate in a woman, Ann Bradstreet, the daughter of Governor Dudley, secured contem-



porary fame as a poetess, though she married at sixteen and was the mother of eight children. It has never been easy to define the exact position of woman in the Christian church, more especially if Paul's advice is considered by the theologians as binding for all time. In New England the trouble growing out of Mrs. Hutchinson's theological vagaries brought the question up acutely, but it was nevertheless decided, as so many other doubtful points have to be determined, not on absolute principles, but as one of degree. A synod of elders in 1637 decreed "that they (women) might some few gather to pray and edify one another, yet such an assemblage as was then in practice in Boston, where sixty or more did meet every week, and one woman (in a prophetic way by resolving questions of doctrine and expounding scripture) took upon her the whole exercises, was agreed to be discreditable and without rule." \*

In the Puritan ecclesiastical system at any rate there was no such sphere assigned to woman as in the Roman Catholic Church. There, as cloistered nuns, they could by privation, prayer, and absolute purity accumulate in the treasury of the saints a surplus of good works to be disposed of by the church as compensation for the shortcomings of repentent sinners in this wicked world, or the payment of purgatorial fines. Or, as members of teaching and nursing orders, they could exercise some of the very highest faculties of the sex. It was in performing these beneficent functions that, in the early colonial days of New France, women played a very important and prominent part.

The distressing stories told by the Jesuits of the poverty, ignorance and superstition of the Indians, and of their susceptibility to religious teaching touched many a heart in France. But none responded more ardently and practically to the appeals of the *Relations* than two women of family: Marie de Vignerod (Madame de Comballet, Duchess d'Aiguillon, the niece of the great Cardinal), and Madame de la Peltrie. The Duchess, like other religious women of the age, not only looked on the monastic life as the consummation of perfect piety, but had gone further and actually assumed, as a novice, the garb

---

\*Winthrop, vol. i, p. 287.



of the Carmelites. It is supposed that her uncle disapproved of the step, and that she at his solicitation returned to the world. But whether that be so or not, she continued to be animated by fervent zeal, and is said to have sought advice from her special director, Saint Vincent de Paul, as to the best method of carrying her convictions into practice. As Madame de Comballet, she had corresponded in 1636 with Father le Jeune on the subject of a hospital in Quebec. The enterprise took shape in the following year under her auspices and at her charge, for she gave 22,400 livres as an endowment. A temporary building had already been erected under the supervision of the Jesuit Fathers on the twelve acres granted her by the company, before the duty of filling this dangerous mission was assumed, in 1639, by nursing nuns of the Augustine order of the Mercy of Jesus. Three delicate women were found willing to sacrifice themselves. Mère de Saint Ignace, the Mother Superior, was only twenty-nine years old, and was a sufferer herself from ill health, but a woman of indomitable courage and energy. Her companions were Mère de Saint Bernard, a quiet, contemplative woman, and Mère de Saint Bonaventure, a gentle creature who had assumed the habit of a nun at eighteen years of age, and had never left her cloister. If meekness, tenderness and charity are the most potent agents for influencing suffering and dying men, whether savage or civilized, these three women, whose only sense of strength came from the reliance on Divine aid, were well equipped for their noble mission.

But if the need of hospital accommodation and good nursing was being keenly felt, hardly less urgent was the need of some provision for female education. This also the devout women of France were prepared to furnish without drawing on the company in the colony or in France. When Saint Angèle at Bresse, in 1537, was first moved to erect an order of women whose vocation should be to relieve distress and teach the ignorant, she conceived that this object could be best accomplished by the members living singly in private houses. Ere long, however, the tendency towards association became irresistible, and her first followers formed themselves into communities of cloistered nuns, allied to the order of St. Augustine, though



their rules did not enforce absolute seclusion, as this would have interfered with the fulfilment of their founder's charitable objects. They adopted the name, and were inspired by the example, of the martyr virgin, St. Ursula. It was not till the beginning of the seventeenth century that, under the instigation of Madame de St. Boise, the order opened its convent doors to boarders seeking education, and adopted the rules by which the Ursulines are still governed. The order was therefore in the first ardor of its re-creation when Madame de la Peltrie was inspired, by Father le Jeune's glowing accounts of the spiritual receptivity of the Indians, to devote her life to the education of the girls. It was by a fortunate and strange coincidence that she was brought into intercourse through Father Coudran, General of the order, with that holy man whom all Christians have agreed to canonize, St. Vincent de Paul, and with another woman, fired by as ardent zeal as herself, though of a less explosive temperament, Mère de l'Incarnation. Mère Marie was a type of woman which could hardly be produced under Puritan influence or on English soil. As a child she dreamed and saw visions of the Saviour in human form embracing her. She married at seventeen, lost her husband at the age of nineteen; devoted her son to the service of the church, and remained in the world until he was twelve. She was converted, and resolved never to remarry. In coming to this resolution she acted in response to her inclinations, as well as to a call which she received when in a state of unconscious ecstasy (or catalepsy). After taking the veil she was moved in the spirit to make Canada the scene of her labors, and in a vision saw as her companion a woman, whom she afterwards recognized as Madame de la Peltrie, when she came to the convent to enlist recruits for New France. Her aspirations were realized, and she became the foundress of the Ursuline Order in Canada. In Quebec she was elected and reelected Superior of the Convent of the Ursulines until her death in 1671. Not only does her influence still pervade the order, but she left an imperishable record in her letters which have been roughly divided into religious and secular, though a vein of mystical devotion runs through all she wrote. Most of the letters were addressed to her son, who entered the priesthood and never saw



his mother again after her departure for Canada. She wrote in purest French, and even her rhapsodies are so much less unintelligible than the style of writing usually adopted by mystics, that one of her biographers, the famous historian Charlevoix, says: "All the arts and sciences use their special phraseology, and therefore there is no reason why the mystical state should not possess a vocabulary of its own, recognized by the usage of all the saints. Nevertheless, the Mère de l'Incarnation thought not proper to use it, and therefore her writings are the more intelligible to all the world."

It is difficult for Protestants, or for any heretics living amidst the distractions of every-day life, to understand or properly value the state of mind, which is engendered by such intense continuous mental direction of thought and emotion, as women and men of high intellectual culture and acute imagination, like Mère Marie or Saint Francis d'Assisi, concentrate on the sufferings of Christ. Roman Catholic authorities have found it difficult to draw the line between heretical quietism and orthodox mysticism. The personality, associations and the influence bearing on the individual under discussion must often have had a bearing on the decision as to his or her deviation from strict orthodoxy. And such personal considerations may have tended to confer on Mère Marie the well-deserved veneration of her contemporaries and of posterity, despite her eccentricities, which certainly verged dangerously on quietism.

Her son, Dom Martin, published in 1686 his mother's "*Méditations et Retraites*," and prefaced the book with an explanation of the ecstatic state of the mystics. The description makes yet more inexplicable the emotional and practical in the character of this extraordinary woman, who was a clear-headed, decisive, active administrator of a large educational establishment, and watched and commented wisely on all that passed outside the walls of her convent.

These two women, Mère Marie and Madame de la Peltrie, as lay coadjutor, were not only conspicuous but influential in New France for a quarter of a century. Madame de la Peltrie appears repeatedly in the annals of the time. She built a house as nearly within the precincts of the Ursuline nunnery proper as their rules allowed. When Bishop Laval came to Quebec in



1659, under the title of Bishop of Petrea, *in partibus infidelium*, but with the powers of a Vicar Apostolic, there was not even a presbytery to accommodate him and the three secular priests who accompanied him. He, evidently foreseeing the inevitable conflict which must arise between himself and the civil officials, did not take up his abode in the chateau, and not caring to ally himself too closely with the Jesuits, accepted the hospitality of their college for but a few days, or until a room was prepared for him in the hospital of the Hotel Dieu. There he remained for three months. But the hospital being crowded, more especially after the arrival in September of a plague ship with its fever-stricken passengers bound for Montreal, he removed with his three priests to Madame de la Peltrie's house, which stood near the corner of the present Garden and Donnacona streets. In order to obey the canons of the order, Mère Marie de l'Incarnation, the Superior, had to erect a fence to shut off the Bishop's house and garden from the nunnery grounds. The Bishop paid Madame de la Peltrie 200 livres a year rent, and kept the house for two years. Ultimately he bought a small house, probably on the site of the present office of the *Fabrique*, the business headquarters of the diocese, and there he and his clergy lived under the rule of life which he had practised in Mons. de Bernière's hermitage at Caen. Mons. de Bernière was Madame de la Peltrie's second husband, whom she married as wife in name only, to escape the importunities of her relations. He was one of those laymen, in that age of extremes, who supported small communities of religious persons, laymen, and clerics. Without taking ecclesiastical vows, he lived under almost as rigid, self-imposed restrictions as cloistered monks. Two personages who play a very prominent part in early Canadian history were members of Bernière's family. Bishop Laval, after he had been archdeacon of Evreux, was for four years an inmate in the hermitage, and there became acquainted with a knight, Mons. de Mezy, a layman, who was subsequently through the Bishop's influence appointed Governor of New France after the Bishop had quarrelled with two gubernatorial predecessors in office. The Bishop's choice, as already told, was unfortunate, for his nominee proved even more untractable than did Governors d'Argenson and d'Avaugour. One of



the secular clergy who accompanied Monsigneur Laval to Canada was Mons. Henri de Bernière, a nephew of Madame de Bernière's husband, who, however, had died very shortly after Laval's arrival in Canada. Under such circumstances, had the Bishop written his autobiography, with as minute and candid reports of conversations, as the writers of his own age were in the habit of doing; and had he incorporated in his personal memoirs the conversations between the widow and her husband's friend, the memoir would have given a curious insight into the workings of the human mind under the artificial conditions which controlled religious thought in those days. Madame de la Peltrie appears repeatedly in the Journal of the Jesuits as foremost in every effort to win the Indian girls from savagery; and when another woman as enthusiastic as herself, Mlle. Mance, and her assistants, came out to Canada as a fore-runner of the Sieur de Maisonneuve, to found Montreal (Ville Marie), Madame de la Peltrie not only treated hospitably these intruders, who were not welcomed by the Quebec authorities, but she even joined the new colony and faced the dangers and hardships of that frontier post for two years, exposed to constant risk of attack from the Iroquois. She remained with Mlle. Mance till the Montreal colony had received accessions of women as well as men. Then she returned to her home and her dear friends in the Ursuline Convent in Quebec.

Mlle. de Mance was a woman of a somewhat similar type, though probably less impulsive and better balanced, than Madame de la Petrie. Her career is as illustrative of the influence and position of women in the early colonial days as that of Madame de la Peltrie.

Montreal was founded by a distinctly religious association, the "Société de Notre Dame de Montreal." The intention was that the leaders of the colony should be celibates. This qualification was possessed by Captain Paul de Chomeday, sieur de Maisonneuve, who was selected to command the fighting men who defended the post against the hostile Iroquois. But just as the expedition was about to sail, a woman who had been inspired by the stories of the Canadian mission as told by the Jesuits, presented herself as a volunteer. She offered to take charge of the commissariat of the expedition and to nurse the



sick and wounded. She was Mademoiselle Mance, who like other devoutly enthusiastic persons, believed herself definitely called to enter the missionary field, and having entered it never for a moment wavered or looked back. She had independent means, and was also the almoner of Madame de Bullion, a wealthy woman who had always taken a lively interest in the colony. In the hour of the colony's greatest need she advanced money for its support and defence; helped to build the Hotel Dieu with Madame de Bullion's financial aid, and succeeded in supporting it and the hospital nuns. In 1658 she returned to France to advocate the reorganization of the society, to collect funds for her hospital, and bring back as nurses, nuns of the Hospitalières de Saint Joseph, in all of which she succeeded. She ended her active life peacefully in 1673, after having shared every danger which during the previous thirty years had threatened the destruction of the colony. She had seen the little band of some thirty or forty men whom she, as one of three or four women, accompanied to Montreal in the capacity of nurse and housekeeper, grow, in no small degree through her business ability, into a town of 1500 souls: and she had realized her hope that, in the colony, should be representatives of the three members of the holy family, namely, priests, in the persons of the Sulpicians, exercising civil as well as ecclesiastical authority, consecrated to Jesus; hospital nuns, consecrated to Joseph; and teaching nuns, consecrated to Mary.

These three women followed one another to the grave in consecutive years, Madame de la Peltrie in 1671, Mlle Mance in 1672, and Mère Marie de l'Incarnation in 1673.

In 1653 the Montreal Company shipped some hundred men to their colony. These men were selected from many trades, and were not independent haphazard emigrants, such as voluntarily joined the communities on the Bay and Plymouth.\* With them were three women, one of whom was Mademoiselle Marguerite Bourgeoys. When she arrived at

---

\*In the list we find 3 surgeons (also doubtless barbers), 12 carpenters, 2 bakers, 1 confectioner, 1 brewer, 1 cooper, 1 tinsmith, 4 weavers, 1 tailor, 1 hatter, 3 cobblers, 1 cutler, 2 armorers, 3 masons, 1 stone cutter, 4 roofers, 2 furniture makers, 1 toolmaker and sharpener, 1 nailer, 1 paver, 60 laborers, of whom several were sawyers.



the village of Ville Marie, she found its forty houses laid out strategically and all occupied by armed colonists, ready by night and day to resist the attack of the Iroquois. Mademoiselle Mance had nearly completed her hospital, into which she moved the year following. In the fort, corresponding to Champlain's *habitation* at Quebec, which had at first accommodated all the settlers who came out with Maisonneuve, there remained only the Governor himself, d'Aillebout, and his family; and Major Closse, who commanded the garrison of sixty-three men. Their duty was to defend the laborers in the field from surprise by the savages. There Mlle. Bourgeoys was received as a welcome guest. She is said to have been engaged to join the colony as a school mistress. Dollier de Casson tells us that her desire was to become a nun; but that before entering the order of the Carmelites, she met a sister of Maisonneuve, who persuaded her that she could serve God better by going to Canada as a member of a lay congregation, or voluntary association of religious people. She followed this advice, went to Canada with two or three others of like mind, and founded the order of Sisters of the Congregation, who devoted their lives to imparting gratuitously secular and religious education to the children of Ville Marie and the neighborhood. She was the Superior, and as Dollier de Casson says, "she was popularly called 'Sister Margaret.'" The order was at that time a lay order and Mlle. Bourgeoys was not a nun. Since then, however, it has been organized as a religious community under perpetual vows. Bishop Laval writes of them as "girls to the number of four, who devoted themselves to the education of children, but are not nuns like the Hospitalières, and have taken no vows, at least publicly. They nevertheless lived a religious life and set an edifying example." Bishop Laval allowed them to establish schools beyond the limits of Ville Marie. Their first school is said to have been at Boucherville, opposite Montreal. In Montreal the first school was opened in a barn furnished by the Montreal Society. These girls supported themselves by manual labor after school hours; and by their disinterested efforts and some help, afforded them from others, the founders of the Congregation had the satisfaction of seeing their efforts crowned with such success, that



the census of 1681 enumerates eighteen sisters engaged in education, with thirteen servants in their employ. To-day the nuns of this order have two large schools in Montreal; one in the heart of the city on the site of the building erected by Mlle. Bourgeoys, the other on the flank of the mountain. The number of teachers in these two establishments is 270, but they have 105 other schools in the parishes of the Province of Quebec, and their scholars number about 250,000, many of them boarders.

Even then these lay workers were under ecclesiastical control, and their course of study and methods were approved of by the church. But such stupendous activity on the part of women workers would not have been agreeable to the church authorities of New England, and if permitted to assert themselves, the women of New England could not have been as rigorously controlled by the Elders as were those of New France by the ecclesiastical authorities there. But it can hardly be contradicted that the group of good women in Canada, whether they had taken vows or were free to pursue their own course, like Madame de la Peltrie, Mlle. Mance, and Margaret Bourgeoys, furnished the leaven of unselfishness and purity which elevated the social life of the whole colony. Though the womanhood of New England was undoubtedly as devout and unselfish, it was excluded by social habits and religious prejudices from exerting its influence as ostensibly and widely as these women of New France exerted theirs.

JAMES DOUGLAS.





